3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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having finished their task, and going off to wash in the river with more whistling and singing.

Specialized crafts

Ngoni elders said that in old days there were no specialists in the villages, except the iron workers who were mostly captured people, and that all men knew how to work in leather, wood, and fibres. By the time schools had been established and a variety of careers lay open to boys, it was rare to find ex-schoolboys taking up village crafts with a view to making a cash income from them. A few did, however, and their choice of a craft was attributed either to wishing to work with a relative, or to an inborn skill and liking for the craft. Tanning skins was one such craft, scraping them, rubbing in ashes and stretching them on frames. Cutting shields from skins and interlacing the front with different coloured skins was considered a highly skilled job. Making wooden spoons, wooden meat dishes, headrests for pillows, hafts for spears and knives, and sheaths for knives, was carried on in most Ngoni villages by two or three specialists using small sharp axes. They were assisted by a youth or two who liked the work, showed some aptitude for it and enjoyed sitting by the kraal gate, intent on their job, but missing nothing of what was going on. In remote villages many men made mats and baskets for household use and for sale and paid their taxes from such sales. Every man knew how to make bark rope for binding loads, fastening the grass on roofs, tying up beasts.

Musical instruments were another specialized craft, inseparable from being a musician and knowing how to perform on them. Small hand pianos of strips of metal on a wooden base, single stringed and several stringed lyres strung over a hollow gourd—these were solo instruments to accompany songs. A boy might all of a sudden decide to make such an instrument and learn how to play it by assiduous practice.